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THE SOLIDARITY OF THE FAITH.

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Modern Oxford Tracts



THE SOLIDARITY OF
THE FAITH

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Bishop of Oxford

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The Solidarity of the Faith

By

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PREFATORY NOTE

A SMALL Conference of Clergy has met three times in Oxford to consider a difficulty with which some of them have had to deal extensively in their ministry. The difficulty is the feeling in the minds of many persons with regard to the whole principle of authority in the Church of England even touching the fundamental creeds, the doubt whether the toleration of error in the Church of England has not reached a point at which toleration becomes complicity. The series of Tracts, of which the following is one, has resulted from the meetings of this Conference. The title of the series contains the word " Oxford " because the Conference was planned and met in Oxford, though the writers in it include several Cambridge men.

THE SOLIDARITY OF THE FAITH

INTRODUCTORY

DISRAELI in *Endymion* gives us the following dialogue—

“Sensible men are all of the same religion.”

“And what is that religion?”

“Sensible men never say.”¹

We are all of us familiar with this “religion of all sensible men,” with its abhorrence of distinctive tenets and creeds and specific corporate obligations. It is indeed much in evidence in our present-day literature. But for the most part it has ceased to be anonymous. It is called Christianity—that “broad and rational Christianity which is in harmony with the modern spirit.” There is in fact a widespread tendency to call by the name of Christianity something very much less distinctive than the religion of the Christian Church has really been.

The Christian Church claims to represent Jesus Christ in the world—to be His Body, indwelt by His Spirit, the organ chosen by Himself in which to communicate and express Himself. And, inasmuch as He is “the Way, the Truth and the Life,” the Church is to embody and represent among men this Way, to bear witness to this Truth, and to perpetuate this Life. So far as concerns the mission of the Church to bear witness to the Truth—

¹ This saying is older than Disraeli, but I cannot trace its origin.

that is to say, its prophetic office—it claims to rest wholly upon a certain self-revelation or word of God. Of that word the Hebrew people were of old the chosen recipients. In many parts and in many manners God spoke by their prophets, so as really to reveal His will and character and nature; and this divine self-revelation was consummated in Jesus Christ, one who is more than a prophet, who is the Son of God incarnate; and the divine word which reached in Him (as far as this world is concerned) its full and final expression, was committed to the Church. This, and nothing but this, it is authorised to convey to men, it is commissioned to perpetuate and to guard. This is the fundamental claim of the Catholic Church.

This special characteristic of the prophetic claim of the Church is closely connected with certain famous utterances of the New Testament which suggest the impotence of the human intellect to attain by its own efforts the true knowledge of God. It is enough to cite our Lord's great saying¹: "I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and understanding, and hast revealed them unto babes; yea, Father, for so it was well pleasing in thy sight"—and S. Paul's similar declaration: "Seeing that in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom knew not God, it was God's good pleasure through the foolishness of the preaching to save them that believe."² The learned class, "the wise and understanding" of every period, has special resources and makes special claims which the mass of men cannot share. It expects to attain religious truth from the vantage ground of its own privileged position or as the conclusion of its own rational processes. This is its weakness from the Christian point of view. For the message of Jesus Christ was to no special class. It

¹ S. Matt. xi. 25, 26.

² I Cor. i. 21.

acknowledges no privilege in learning more than in wealth. It makes its appeal to that in man which is common to all men. There is in all men a fundamental need—a sense of want, a sense of sin, a need of God—His forgiveness and His fellowship—and corresponding to this need, a childlike capacity for trust or faith. And it is to this “general heart of man,” and to this only, that our Lord appeals. To it He claims to deliver a divine and infallible message : something which is not to be attained to by the action of the intellectual faculty of a trained class of wise men, but is to be received by all men alike simply by faith as the word of God.

In order to fulfil its function, the Catholic faith has of course been bound to use all the resources of the human intellect—to express itself in formulas, to develop a theology, and to enter into philosophical contentions. But, so far as it has been true to its original idea, it has always claimed to be in its substance simply and solely the word of God.

Is there then a doctrine, or body of doctrines, about God and man, which has underlain all the theological developments of the Church, which is explicit or plainly implied in the writings of the New Testament, and which can justly claim to be the word of God delivered through ancient prophets and finally through the Son, Jesus Christ ? And if so, of what elements does it consist ? Whether at last we receive it, or refuse it, let us at any rate, with all fitting reverence, consider this fundamental question.

We find ourselves in our English religious world to-day, and in our English Church, in a condition of extraordinary chaos. And the cause of this chaos is in great measure that the Church, as an organised body, has been taking no adequate pains to fulfil its prophetic office—to maintain in vigorous life the sense of the Catholic faith. During the last twenty years there has been amongst us

a considerable output of more or less theological literature ; but, so far as it has been of outstanding ability, it has been predominantly of a critical and academic character—markedly starting from the “learned” point of view and appealing to the scholar : alien to the wants and feelings of the ordinary believer ; and again, it has been strongly individualistic in method and diverse and distracting in its results. Meanwhile in this hurly-burly of critical opinion, as it appears to the common man, the common Christian conscience in teacher and learner has become bewildered. Men do not know what to believe. The religious world has taken refuge in action from the difficulties of thought and belief. It has thrown itself with enthusiasm into the evangelisation of the world, or the reunion of Christians, or social reform, or Catholic worship and practice. But the common mind of the Church has become starved and incoherent. The various parties or schools of thought, under the impulse of different enthusiasms, seem to be moving in opposite directions : the sense of the Catholic faith has lost its proper power of holding men together.

There is then a crying need which this series of essays seeks to remedy. We wish to restate and interpret the faith in modern terms—to state it as men must state it who believe that truth is one, and that there can be no conflict between matters of faith and the conclusions of knowledge ; but first of all we wish to exhibit the fundamental or original creed, and to vindicate its claim to be really the word of God delivered through the prophets and the Son ; and to me it falls, in opening the series, to bring into evidence, what is at any rate a very impressive fact, that there is a quite distinctive and intelligible body of doctrines about God and man which are certainly the outcome of the prophetic teaching of the Old Testament and as certainly are the characteristic doctrines of the New Testa-

ment, and that this body of doctrines has to an extraordinary degree the quality of coherence or solidarity.

THE SOLIDARITY OF THE FAITH

WHEN we speak of an "article" of the Christian faith we use a word which means originally a small limb or joint, a component part of a living whole; and in its transferred sense, as meaning an element in a connected statement of principles, it still retained the idea of interconnection and logical coherence between one article and all the rest. The articles of the Faith would thus be not a number of distinct propositions received on the same authority, or a number of separate statements among which the mind can pick and choose, taking one and abandoning another, but indissoluble and indiscerptible elements of which each one involves or leads on to all the others. The word "article" therefore suggests one important test of the "essentials" of the Catholic faith—that is, that they cohere so that the admission of one suggests the admission of all, and the refusal of one the refusal of all. I say *one* important test, for I have already been insisting that the faith of the Church claims to rest upon a word or self-revelation of God delivered in a historical process, and culminating in an historical person, Jesus Christ. The test of logical coherence must therefore remain subsidiary to the question what actually was from the beginning the content of the preaching which claimed to be the word of God. I hope at no point to leave this most primary consideration out of sight. Still it will make a great deal of difference to the appeal which the Christian religion makes to our minds if it appears that a certain set of traditional ideas about God and man, which have possessed

the Church from the first, are found so to cohere and hold together as to suggest the one to the other, and so to depend upon one another that the absence of the one would weaken the structure of the whole. I set myself then in this essay to prove that there is such a coherence, and I will find my point of departure in the distinctively Jewish and Christian idea of God.

For there is a distinctively Christian idea of God. When Christianity came out into the world it found a certain kind of monotheism in possession of intelligent circles—the religion in fact “of all sensible men.” It was the idea of a universal Reason or Spirit of the universe—its immanent energy and law and order. This idea of the immanence of God in the world Christianity at once assimilated. S. Paul affirms it unhesitatingly. Indeed it was already suggested in the Old Testament Scriptures and had been already welcomed in the Jewish schools. But Christianity was not satisfied with it. It proved itself from the first intensely combative on behalf of the distinctively Christian idea of God as the Being who is not only in the world, but beyond it and over it as its Creator : who “made all things out of nothing,” and for whom the universe was not “of His nature” but simply the creation of His will. This doctrine of the transcendent God, intensely personal, supremely righteous, the eternal Spirit of absolute knowledge and of power limited by nothing but His own character, the absolute Creator of all that is, the Judge of all rational beings and the living Father of His people, was the summary outcome of the teaching of the prophets : and there can be no reasonable doubt that our Lord, while He both individualised and broadened the sense of God’s Fatherhood, did accept as God’s real revelation of Himself this Jewish doctrine. There is no claim more evidently made by Christ Jesus than the claim to have, as Son, the real and certain knowledge of the Father ;

and while He said nothing, so far as the Gospels record, about divine immanence, he used constantly and with the utmost naiveness (as we may reverently say) language which implies the Jewish doctrine of God, the absolute Creator and Judge, personal, omnipotent and omniscient. Again, nothing is more certain than that S. Paul believed himself, the apostle of the Gentiles, hated and persecuted as he was by the men of his own race, to be maintaining against the heathen the specific Hebrew doctrine of God, "whom he worshipped from his fathers with a pure conscience."¹ For this specific doctrine of God, then, the Church was set to contend. And, in fact, the whole sequence of Christian doctrine depends upon it or follows from it.

From this there follows, and with this there agrees a certain doctrine of man (which applies also to all other rational spirits which exist or may exist), viz. that men are creatures—not parts of God or "sparks of the divine being" but simply creatures,² distinguished as spiritual beings from other creatures by being endowed with the gift of freedom and intelligence, that is to say not subjected like other creatures to a power which simply works through them in accordance with mechanical or vital laws, but by their very being capable of exhibiting, and

¹ 2 Tim. i. 3.

² We touch here upon the profoundest of all metaphysical problems—the relation of human, derived and wholly dependent, personalities upon God whose being in some sense comprises them all: and the allied problem of the relation of human freedom to divine foreknowledge and purpose. The speculative human intellect appears to make very little way with this profound problem. The Bible does not concern itself with it. It affirms both the all-pervading being and knowledge and control of God and also the reality of human freedom, and is content to let its doctrine be verified in action by the fact that it responds to the requirements of life. This two-sided doctrine is not in fact, metaphysically considered, more difficult than any other solution of the problem which has suggested itself to the human intellect.

summoned to exhibit, intelligent co-operation with the will of God who made them, vicegerents of God to whom is committed in greater or lesser measure the government and perfecting of the world and of themselves—not gods, but beings made in the divine image or likeness, and capable of an immortal fellowship with God. If the Christian idea of God as at once omnipotent and good is to be maintained, there is (as far as I know) no explanation which can be suggested of the origin of moral evil in the world except that it is involved in the possibility of freedom. The freedom to do right involves the freedom to refuse the right and do wrong. At any rate, this ambiguous freedom is implied throughout the Bible. And in all their actions, words and thoughts, God is the judge of free beings. They are not parts of God, necessary to His being, which must at last, through whatever wanderings, return to the abyss of the divine life, and realise the end of their being in God—but responsible creatures, subjected absolutely to God's judgment, and capable, by their own wilfulness, of ruining themselves finally and utterly. God will vindicate Himself at the last in every corner of His creation, and will fulfil His purpose in the whole world: but the individual creature, man or other spirit, may ruin himself even to the uttermost depth of ruin. I do not think it can be doubted that this doctrine emerges among Jewish ideas exactly in proportion as the ideas of human individuality and of the life of the world to come become distinctly realised. I do not think it can be denied that it appears in the clearest emphasis and most naive simplicity in the teaching of our Lord and of the apostolic writers. The very possibility of a soul being eternally lost horrifies us to-day. We are inclined in various ways to ignore it or deny it. No doubt it has been made quite intolerable at many periods in the current teaching of the Church. We do well to lay all legitimate stress upon our ignorance: upon the principle

that we do not see the end of God's dealings with human souls and that "the more part of his works are hid": and upon the principle that with regard to what lies outside our present human experience we can be taught only in figures and symbols—"we see through a glass, darkly"—a blurred reflection of truth only, as in a metal mirror or a symbolic story. We do well again to recall constantly to our minds that S. Paul, while he affirms the doctrine of "eternal perishing,"¹ does not hesitate also to affirm a final unity of all things when God shall be all in all.² It is not the place here to develop ideas on this tremendous subject.³ But however much stress we may lay on the blessed truth that "it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of his little ones should perish," and by whatever legitimate alleviations we may seek to make the idea of the final loss of human souls more tolerable to our minds, it seems to me indisputable that in the Bible the doctrine of individual spirits who are rational and free and destined for immortality, and are yet creatures and no more, is bound up closely with a doctrine of responsibility and judgment, which involves a limitless capacity of the individual spirit for perversity and self-destruction. I think the doctrines are held together in the revelation: and I think the two sets of ideas cohere as naturally and inevitably as, on the other hand, universalism—the notion that every spirit must ultimately attain its proper goal—coheres

¹ 2 Thess. i. 9.

² 1 Cor. xv. 28.

³ The Church has never expressed any such decision or binding judgment upon the subject, as it has upon the person of Christ. For my own part, I am disposed, with Mr. Gladstone and Dr. Agar Beet (amongst others), to question whether the idea of the necessary everlastingness of each human consciousness has not been imported into Christianity from alien sources. I see nothing in the Bible which is incompatible with the idea that eternal loss may involve the ultimate extinction of personal consciousness. I have tried to make a balanced statement on the subject in *The Epistle to the Romans* (Murray), vol. ii. p. 210.

with the idea that all spirits are in some sense parts of the one divine spirit, portions of the one divine consciousness and life.

In the Bible the universality of sin is assumed throughout as a fact of experience. The supremacy of God will one day be vindicated; the "day of the Lord" will usher in His kingdom. Meanwhile human wilfulness, and the wilfulness of rebel spirits, more dimly felt in the background, has wrought havoc in the world so complete and profound that the task of God is to redeem or buy back out of alienation and ruin the people in whom His good pleasure is to be realised. It would be impossible to state too strongly how constant is the assumption of prevalent sin in the New Testament: and the ideas of "salvation," "redemption," "reconciliation," "propitiation," "repentance," "conversion," "regeneration," "re-creation," are only intelligible upon this basis. And it is the undertone of all our Lord's words and works. Not indeed that the Bible, or our Lord, represents human nature as totally depraved. Very far from it. There is the good soil in human hearts waiting for the divine seed. But the assumption is always that to enter the kingdom men must "turn," must become new men by a new birth; that the man for whom there is good hope is the self-condemned "sinner" who can be called to repentance; that even in view of their ordinary goodness and kindness, men are "evil"; that Christ is come as the strongest of redeemers to set free the slaves of the evil one—the "strong man's goods."

This assumption of the universality of sin, to which the conscience of men has responded—and the best of men most heartily, from their experience within themselves and without—suggests irresistibly the idea that sin has become in some manner a sort of law for human nature, that below all the actual sins of men human nature itself

has become perverted or disordered. This is the idea which S. Paul has expressed in the allied doctrines of the "old man," the fallen human nature, to which all men by birth belong, and the "new man," the humanity of Jesus Christ, the second Adam, into whom they are to be incorporated and by whom they are to be redeemed. But S. Paul is in fact only making articulate a feeling or idea which possesses the New Testament. The idea has recently been strongly attacked by Dr. Tennant, who will acknowledge no sinfulness in men behind the actual sins of men. It is true that Christianity holds strongly to the position that sinfulness is not of the essence of humanity—that it is not included (if we may so speak) in the original intention of God for man. "Sin is lawlessness," and therefore unnatural: but the lawlessness has affected the whole human stock and plunged it in a common disorder and alienation from God. This position is deeply ingrained in Christianity and is supported by the deepest assent of the spiritual consciousness of mankind; and the strongest support of the doctrine has been found in the contrast between the conscious sinlessness of Christ and the conscious sinfulness of the greatest saints, the Isaiahs and S. Johns and S. Pauls, whom the world apart from Christ has known.

In this series of essays it will belong to another and not to me to offer a rational vindication of the idea of racial or "original" sin, in view of all that biology has to teach us about the origin and development of human life upon the earth, and in view of all that psychology has to teach us about the human soul. For my own part, I am convinced that Dr. Tennant's doctrine of a human soul is far too individualistic to be true. I am sure that while we are sufficiently individual for personal responsibility to be real, there is something in our spiritual personality as

really racial as in our bodies. And I am sure that it is impossible to eradicate out of the New Testament the profound contrast between the sinlessness of Christ and the sinfulness of "all us the rest" of mankind. But it is not my business to enter upon this discussion. My business is only to indicate how necessary a place the idea of original sin holds in the sequence of fundamental Christian ideas.

From the condition of ruin and helplessness mankind, being totally unable to redeem or save itself, is redeemed by the act of God. But it being the fixed method of God to save man only through man, the method of redemption is through the entrance of God into human life. To a very real extent this idea of the entrance of God into the human struggle is already suggested in the Old Testament, notably in the teaching of Hosea and Isaiah. But it attains full expression only in the Incarnation. "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son born of a woman—to redeem." The kinship of man with God, as made in the divine image, has suggested to thoughtful minds the supposition that the Incarnation is not merely the remedy for sin, but, apart from sin and beyond it, was the eternal or fundamental purpose of God for man—the consummation of man in his essential being: and there are phrases of S. Paul which are in harmony with this speculation. But undoubtedly the Incarnation, as it actually took place and as it is almost always represented in the New Testament, is the redemptive act of God. It is an act of "new creation," by which there emerges in the midst of a tainted and disordered world the germ and principle of the true and perfect manhood. The only begotten Son or Word of the Father, Himself the instrument of the creation and maintenance of all things that are, comes out of the eternal and divine Life and by the operation of the Holy Ghost in the womb of

Mary the Virgin is made man and born, the predestined Christ, on whom the highest hopes of men had been fixed. He is born true man but new man. "He was manifested to take away sins, and in Him is no sin." The contrast is marked and overwhelming between the consciousness of sins and sinfulness which has possessed the saints, and the total absence of any sense of sin within which characterises the New Man. He fights a desperate fight with sin without, and repels the suggestions of sin which are offered to His human spirit, but there is no trace of any sense of sin or unworthiness or of any struggle with a sinful tendency within. This sinlessness would seem at first sight to make the Son of Man a profitless example to all the rest of mankind, the hardest part of whose experience is the consciousness of inward defilement and sinful inclination: but in fact it is the uniqueness or "abnormality" of the Christ which ultimately makes His example the supreme power through all the generations of men. His manner of approach to men is not to say "Be as I am, for what I can be you all can be: you have nothing to do but to follow my example." His method is rather to inspire absolute faith in Himself as the Saviour from all that weakens and degrades human life. In perfect correspondence of word and action He sets before men's eyes the pattern of true human life in union with God. Then in unflinching obedience to the Father, He offers in man's name the perfect sacrifice of reconciliation. Over against all the wilfulness and lawlessness which have disordered human nature and the world and alienated it from God, He is obedient to the extreme point, "unto death, even the death of the Cross," and He offers His blood, His life "poured out," before the Father as the free-will offering of perfect purity and completeness by which man, as represented in Him, is once more made acceptable to the Father: and then, raised again from

death by the Father's power and lifted again into the glory of God, at "the Father's Right Hand," He becomes by the Spirit sent forth out of His glorified manhood, the spring of new life and power by which men all the world over who "receive Him" are filled with a new inward life—His own life now made their own. The human example and the teaching of Jesus is to give them their ideal of what human life can be: the sacrifice is to win for them the continual freedom for a fresh start—the "forgiveness of their sins": the Spirit, bringing Christ within them, is to transform them inwardly and effectively into the likeness of the pattern that was shown them outwardly in example and teaching.

Once more it is not my business to vindicate the idea of the Atonement wrought for us by Christ to which we contribute nothing, which is simply by us to be believed and received in faith as God's pure gift of redemptive love. But this I will say, that I do not think that the idea of vicarious sacrifice winning for us the forgiveness of sins would ever have presented the difficulty which it has presented to the consciousness of men, if the work of Christ *for* us had been kept, as it is in S. Paul, in close and constant association with His work *in* us; or, to put it in other words, if the idea of forgiveness had been kept in its true place as no more than the removal of an obstacle on the way of the true life. "I will run the way of thy commandments, because thou hast set my heart at liberty."

This central redemptive act of God in Christ was accompanied and vindicated by miracles. As to the credibility of miracles, I must leave it to another to speak. My object now is to explain the position of the miraculous in the whole Christian or Biblical view of the world. In part the miracles wrought by Christ may be interpreted as the natural acts of a new kind of Being. As life in all its manifestations may be said to be miraculous

from the point of view of inanimate nature—that is, inexplicable in terms of its laws—so Christ's new nature, the new relation established in Him between the source of all life and our common manhood, would naturally exhibit laws of action and power hitherto unknown. A new kind of "virtue would go out of Him" upon His fellow-men and upon nature. But it is not in this way that miracles are chiefly regarded in the New Testament. They are chiefly regarded as the acts of God wrought in Him and for Him to vindicate His mission, and often specifically as the response of the Father to the prayers of the Son. In particular, the miracles wrought upon Christ—the miracles of His birth of a Virgin and resurrection from the dead—are represented as the acts of the Father. The manner of our Lord's birth is recorded in the simplest way in the first and third Gospels, and the narratives on investigation show very evident traces of coming respectively from Joseph and from Mary. There is not anywhere else in the New Testament any notice of the manner of His birth or of its significance.¹ But it was put in the forefront of the earliest Christian Creeds, doubtless because it was felt that the miracle was congruous with the divine purpose of the birth. For my own part, I must profess that some kind of miraculous action of God seems to me inseparable in idea from S. Paul's doctrine of Christ as the New Man, the new creation of God.

¹ Unless indeed those scholars can justify themselves who, like Resch and Blass and Zahn, relying on early Western evidence, would read S. John i. 12, 13 thus: "As many as received him to them gave he authority to become children of God, even to them which believe on his name, *who was* born not of bloods nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." This reading would describe very accurately the conditions of our Lord's birth, as recorded in S. Matthew and S. Luke, and would associate these conditions directly with the purpose of the Incarnation as the source of a new life for man.

But the coherence of miracles in principle with the whole sequence of Biblical ideas can be seen, perhaps, most clearly in connection with the central miracle of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

The one power that made and rules the world is God. He is righteousness and love. But the world under the guidance of rebel wills has become profoundly estranged from God. God in His long-suffering has waited and watched for recovery, working for man through man in the long history of redemption. Now the fulness of the time has come. All the purpose of God is concentrated on this moment and on the person of Jesus Christ. God is doing at this moment a new thing. There is being created the new man, the new world which is to redress the balance of the old. It is a new creative act of God: a fresh start to reorder the disordered world. Something is being done which the previous order of the world, with all its inheritance of sin and woe, asks for indeed, but cannot accomplish or account for. This is what warrants—or, as we may say, logically seems to require—an act of God the Creator, which, from the point of view of the known order is miraculous—a new thing. It is not analogous to the normal act of God in sustaining and developing the world. It is analogous to the original act of creation. Thus, in fact, when the Christ has been put to death on Calvary, and sin—the normal sin of man—has manifested in one summary act its full sinfulness, and also attained its fullest seeming triumph over God and His purpose, God vindicates Himself as God, and the vindication—the raising of the dead body of Jesus Christ to new and glorious life—is such as makes it evident that the power which made and rules the world is on the side of Christ.

This is a miracle in the sense that it is a new creative act of God, but in the deepest sense it is no anomalous

portent and no violation of the law of nature. It is the supremely rational act by which God vindicates alike the purpose of nature and Himself.

In Christ risen and glorified the whole purpose of God is disclosed, but not accomplished. That which has been done in His person is to be made effectual for all mankind. This is the meaning of the mission of the Spirit and the foundation of the Church. It is the perpetuation of Christ's own mission; and the apostolic miracles which accompany the issuing of the Church into the world are outward signs of this divine continuity. The Church, then, is the extension of the Incarnation. As a visible fellowship, human and divine, with a ministry and sacraments which give it outward form and consistency, it perpetuates all the fruits of the Incarnation—all that has been won by the life, the sacrifice, the glory of the Christ, and the Mission of the Spirit, all "the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ."

The Church thus represents the now realised kingdom of God in the world. But it represents it under conditions of conflict and disorder like those which accompanied the earthly life of Christ. On the whole, in the New Testament there is no general triumph anticipated for the Church of Christ in the present world. Rather our Lord seems to anticipate for us a strain on our faith so great as to be barely endurable. "When the Son of Man cometh will He find the faith on the earth?" But the triumph of Christ has been once for all won, and will some day be made evident. When it is made evident "in the end of the world," it will be in a manner analogous to all the previous "days of the Lord"—that is to say, those moments in history when God has bared His arm, and men have seemed to feel and see Him visibly at work. These "days of the Lord"—whether on Jerusalem or on Rome, or on any other civilisation or institution of men—

have been at once days of manifested judgment on all that has resisted God and flouted His will, and at the same time have supplied a foretaste of the triumph of the people of God. So shall it be also at the end of the world. Human history will close in a great vindication of God, wrought out on the greatest scale and with the utmost completeness. It is manifest that we are taught about this great issue of things only in symbols and figures. But the symbols and figures embody consistently three great principles: (1) the final exposure and overthrow of all that has resisted God—that is the final “day of judgment”; (2) the final perfecting of man in union with God—that is the glory of “the new Jerusalem”; (3) the final fellowship of the material and the spiritual—that is to say the resurrection of the dead in their “spiritual” body and “the new heaven and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” This is the vindication of the spiritual purpose of God in the material creation; and it is a vital part of Christian doctrine to insist on maintaining that there is, at bottom, no opposition between spirit and matter, that the glory of incarnate spirits is to be material also, and that there is an eternal destiny for the whole material creation.

This doctrine of the final Day of the Lord has been of recent years assuming a quite new importance and prominence. It has been commonly concluded by critics that our Lord accepted the apocalyptic idea of the coming of the Son of Man in glory, and, as being Himself this Son of Man, anticipated and announced His own coming within the limits of the existing generation of men: and that in this He was the victim of a delusion, and that the whole apocalyptic idea is to be discarded as a Jewish dream. The fascinating and difficult question of what exactly our Lord did or did not teach about the end of the world I must leave to the writer about His infallibility. But this seems plain to

me—that the idea of the coming and the end, the summary vindication of God in the history of man and of nature, though it is taught to us only in symbols and figures, is yet, in all its three elements or ideas, inseparable from the conception of a God who made and rules and judges the world.

In all the long process of redemption God has been revealing Himself to men. Through the coming of Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, and through the mission of the Divine Spirit, the Name of God has come to be known as the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. This self-disclosure of God's Being has been made, as it were, incidentally in the process of redemption; it has been, as we may say, overheard rather than heard. Men in listening to Christ came to be familiar with the thought of a Son with the Father and of a Holy Spirit who was to be sent forth from the Father and yet was to be the gift of the Son. Then, when Christ was glorified, they had the personal experience of the coming of the Holy Spirit. The language of the New Testament certainly implies that each one of the Three is to be thought of as a person willing and working and entering into relations with men; while at the same time the presence of each involves the presence of the other "persons." The presence of the Spirit is the presence of Christ. The presence of Christ is the indwelling of the Father. The Father has not, either in nature or in man, any separate sphere of action. In creation and redemption alike the action of God is through His Word or Son; and though the Holy Spirit is spoken of chiefly in the New Testament either as inspiring the ancient prophets or as indwelling in the incarnate Christ, and sent forth to perpetuate His mission, yet the language of the Old Testament was not forgotten, which spoke of the Spirit or breath of God as the animating principle of creation. The New Testament

shows very little direct intention of revealing or discussing the eternal being of God in Himself. The Christian Church showed itself modestly unwilling to intrude into things too high for it, or to strain human thought or language beyond its proper limits. Yet it could not but be possessed with the thought of God as in His eternal being threefold—Father, Son, and Spirit; and as it came out into the world of philosophical speculation and found itself obliged to vindicate the distinctively Christian idea of God as the Creator, existing eternally before all creation and needing no creature for His own perfect being and life, it found, from the earliest stages of its history, in the thought of the Trinity, the assistance it needed in maintaining the self-completeness of God in Himself. God is a living God, and whether life be thought of under the category of will or thought or love, it involves relationship. Personality is, in fact, essentially a social thing. Thus the Christian Church was thrown back upon that impression of the divine personality as essentially threefold, which had been so deeply impressed upon its memory and heart. God does not wait for creation in order to realise Himself. He is social in His eternal being before all creation, and there, in Father and Son and Holy Ghost, lies eternally the perfect life.

One consequence of this theology we must not omit to notice. It is that nothing was more essential or fundamental to Christian thought than the unfathomable distinction between the Creator and the creature. It could tolerate no Arian idea of an intermediate being or demi-god. If Christ was God and to be worshipped, and if the same was true of the Holy Spirit, then the Son and Spirit must be eternally "of the substance of God"; and if Christ was really God and man, then He must really subsist in two substances or natures, which, however much united in one person must really and everlastingly remain distinct.

The dogmatic terminology about Christ, as one person in the two natures, has been subjected lately to a great deal of adverse criticism: but it seems to me that at the last resort, if the incarnation is to be interpreted in accordance with the fundamental Jewish and Christian idea of God the Creator, distinct by an unfathomable depth of distinction from all His creatures, you find yourself necessarily involved in the idea of the one divine person in the two essentially distinct natures, and I cannot see that there is anywhere on the intellectual horizon any indication of better terms in which to express this fundamental distinction than those which the Church was led to choose.

I have been trying, with necessary brevity, to show the connection in idea of the most prominent elements or articles of the Christian faith as it is presented to us in Scripture, and as it underlies the theological developments of later days. I think it is hardly possible to state too strongly how logically coherent are these elements or articles. It is comparatively a rare thing to reject the faith as a whole. But it is a much commoner thing to seek to disintegrate the faith by pulling out of the structure this element and that, and substituting some material which belongs really to a different order of thought. Thus recently we have had a reasoned and able proposal to disencumber the Christian Creed of the belief in "original" sin: another to identify Christ's nature fundamentally with ours in respect of sinlessness: another proposal is made from many quarters to relieve Christianity of the burden of miracles: more broadly, we are bidden by others not to attach the truth of Christianity too closely to any particular historical events: others, while admitting or even exaggerating the place of eschatology in primitive Christian teaching, and in the teaching of Christ Himself, would have us recognise that the idea of the second coming can be allowed to pass out of the present-day expectation

of Christians. Others again would have us revert to the idea of God which Christianity set itself so decisively to oppose, and recognise creation as necessary to God, the sphere in which He first realises His own being.

It seems to me that there is a widespread lack of perception of the coherence, not merely on the ground of authority, but also in logical principle between the different articles of Christian belief. To take only the instance of original sin and the fundamental distinction between Christ's sinless and our sinful human natures, an old writer on dogmatic theology begins his book by saying that the whole system of Christian doctrine revolves on the double pole of sin and redemption, the fall and the recovery, the old Adam and the new. This, I think, is not an exaggeration. Of course, in representing to-day the doctrine of the fall and of racial sin, we have to do it in terms which allow to biology and anthropology their full scientific freedom to tell us and bind us to accept all that is really known about the appearance and development of man upon the earth. I believe that that can be done more easily than could have been expected forty years ago. But the adjustment of relationship between faith and science involves equal attention to both methods: in particular we need to see how engrained into the Christian consciousness and Christian thought as a whole is the idea of a fallen nature needing to be redeemed, and the sense of contrast between our inherent sinfulness and Christ's sinlessness. In regard to the other particular doctrines of Christianity now commonly depreciated, something of the same kind needs to be said. The tendency, as I said just now, is to detach essential portions of the Christian structure of thought and substitute incongruous material from a different structure of thought altogether. I have no wish to attribute to particular teachers who have urged us to disembarrass Christianity

of this doctrine or that, any general adhesion to a non-Christian sphere of thought. On the contrary, very often they are themselves in their general thought profoundly Christian, though they are in my judgment inconsequent at particular points. But I shall make my meaning more clear if, over against the sequence of distinctively Christian ideas, I seek to exhibit another sequence which gathers into itself a number of ideas or doctrines current to-day among professed Christian teachers of a modern type, and indicates, I think, their real affinities.

Let us begin from the conception of the world as the modern category of evolution presents it to us—as a continuous or orderly whole. Contemporary philosophy, like ancient philosophy, finds God in the world; and I would see in the tendency to accept this immanent God as the only God whom we really know, ignoring or putting in the background the specific Biblical doctrine of God the transcendent Creator, the fountain-head of the sequence of ideas which we are now to consider. God being thus thought of as the Spirit of the Universe, it is natural to think of Him as finding in the universe in which He manifests Himself the scene of His own self-realisation. If God is implied in the world, the world is also necessary to God. Again, God is spiritual: He is Reason and Will, the universal reason and will as distinguished from all the particular reasons and wills of individual men. But all these particular reasons and wills are, in some sense, contained in the Universal Reason. They are sparks of the divine Spirit, in some sense parts of the whole of reason and God. Here a philosophical principle or tendency coalesces with a moral feeling which to-day makes men revolt with passionate resentment against the old idea of hell and everlasting punishment, and helps to make prevalent the doctrine of universalism—viz. that every human or individual spirit must one day realise its true end and come

back to God whence it came, and to whom in some sense it essentially belongs. Thus, in the same sequence of ideas, though freedom and consequently sin are admitted as realities, sin is minimised. Nature and man are progressive. Sins are mistakes in the path of progress. The darker aspects of the teaching of the Bible about the world of man, and the startling warnings and judgments of Christ, are ignored or softened down; even the darker prognostications of science and the teachings of history are forgotten; and on the whole Christianity is identified with the idea of a necessary progress for each individual. A particular biological doctrine—not by any means fully established or certainly relevant—the non-inheritance of acquired characters, becomes the ground for denying the idea of sin as, so to speak, engrained into the race. Therefore what is needed is not so much redemption from a universal ruin, as a stimulus to develop the best human forces from within. The destiny of man is the full incarnation of God. God is already, in a measure, incarnate in man, but He is to be so more and more. Christ is the ideal man. In Him we see the divine purpose for man fully realised. But He is, truly considered, the normal man. In Him is disclosed our human nature at its best, in its true union with God. All that represents Him as abnormal is abhorrent. Let His nature be conceived of as simply like ours, so that He may better show what the divine Spirit can do in us. Let “miracles” which represent abnormal actions of God in His case, be allowed to vanish under the scrutiny of criticism without demur and even with satisfaction. Miracles of healing, the “wonderful works of Christ,” we can indeed accept as only analogous to the action of spirit in men of exceptional spiritual force all the world over. But the “nature-miracle” must go. Let Christ be recognised as our true Saviour, because He brings to

light the true dignity and possibility which lies in every one of us. In the evidences, however distorted by tradition, which He gave His disciples after His crucifixion, that He was still alive, let us recognise the great reassurance of personal immortality; and in the tradition of the Pentecostal outpouring let us recognise the fact that His Spirit is universal and undying. Let the Church go forth, as the instrument of the divine Spirit, to proclaim by its teaching and to symbolise by its sacraments the permanence of the Christ-life and the Christ-idea in the world—that is, the true human life and the true idea of man—in no bondage to the letter of Scripture or of ecclesiastical dogmas, and in no hostility to any element of modern knowledge, but in the conviction that the whole of truth whencesoever learned is all part of the truth of Christ. It is recognised that, in the first age of Christianity, and probably in Christ's own teaching, the ideas of Jewish apocalyptic were dominant, and that Christ Himself and His disciples looked forward to His speedy coming upon the clouds of heaven in judgment upon a rebellious Jerusalem and a rebellious world, and to establish the kingdom of heaven upon the renovated earth. But we must recognise the element of illusion in all this, and, abandoning the expectation of any catastrophic change, look forward to a gradual leavening of the world by a diffusion of the Christian spirit, till God's purpose is realised, here or in some other scene, in a kingdom of God embracing all men and all created things.

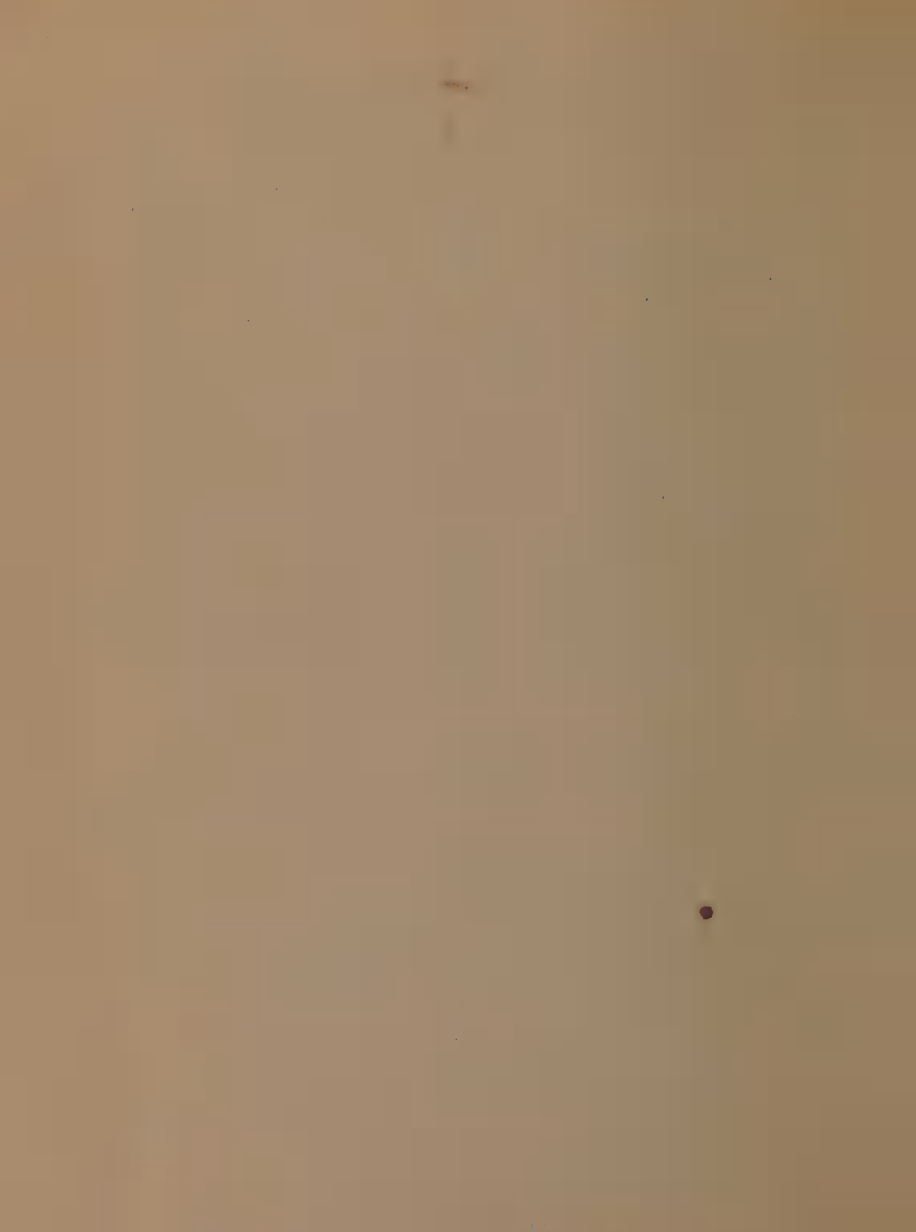
Between the philosophic conception of the immanent God, and the doctrine of universalism, and the minimising of sin, and the denial of original and racial sin, and of the distinction between Christ's humanity and ours, and the denial or deprecation of miracles strictly so-called, and the substitution of the idea of the gradual assimilation of the whole of humanity by the spirit of Christ

for the original conception of the struggle and seeming failure of the Church and the final vindication of God in the Day of the Lord, I see a logical connection similar to that which binds together what are the original and, I am convinced, the genuinely Christian ideas. And it is easy to see that a Pantheistic or a Sabellian doctrine of God lies ready to hand in the background. I think that anyone who holds one of these modernisms is likely to be inclined, and to incline others, to the whole circle of thought which they represent. I hope it will have appeared in the description I have tried to give of this latter sequence of thought that it follows close along what I think are properly Christian lines. But it follows at each stage with a great difference. It is Christian in sound but not in force or real meaning. In force and real meaning its kinship is not with the Christianity of the Church or of the New Testament : and that because it goes back at its root to an idea of God which is not the Christian or Biblical idea of God, but, much rather, that idea of God which Christianity found in possession, which indeed it in part assimilated, but on the whole combated and dispossessed.

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